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EDITORIAL NOTES

If we assume that there may be a place in moral education for some intellectual element we have two possibilities. These correspond to the two ways from which we may look at conduct. Conduct is on the one side purpose, motive, and character; on the other side it is action in a world of men and women. Moral instruction may take its cue from either aspect of conduct. It may put itself at the point of view of the boy or girl looking forward to life with vague purposes and unformed character and developing interests; or it may take its stand upon the side of the moral and social order, with its established values and institutions. In the first case it will work sympathetically with the person, and try to discover what is right and good; in the second case it will start with the social and spiritual good which man has built up and show what this does for each person, and what it requires of each member for its maintenance and progress.

The personal standpoint has been more often chosen by writers on morals. It has seemed more direct in its appeal and better adapted to the immediate end in view. It seems to be the natural outcome of modern civilization which gives the individual increasing scope. In particular it seems to fit into the very nature of moral inquiry which tends to emphasize conscience rather than custom. How often have we heard from preacher and moralist that if we make individuals honest and upright society will be secure.

Further, this method of approach connects directly with certain good tendencies in the average boy and girl, and seeks to organize these into intelligent character. Boys and girls are looking forward to a vocation of some sort; we may teach the moral value of work and the right choice of interests. Boys and girls have a code of honor which approves the generous and brave while it condemns the mean and cowardly; we may bring out the proper relations between self and others, or the kind of courage which is highest and finest. They despise cheating in certain ways; we may show the larger implications of truth and honesty. Many are already keenly sensitive to social standards and anxious to do "right;" we may show them that conscientious conduct has its intellectual side; we may aid them to find a rational standard and thus make them progressive while at the same time we avert some from morbid overscrupulousness. An excellent example of what is meant by this method is given in Ella Lyman Cabot's *Everyday Ethics*.

The standpoint of society's claims and values is presupposed in certain studies already in the curriculum of the high school. We have vaguely

THE STANDPOINT OF SOCIETY believed that one good reason for studying history and political science is that these subjects not only supply information but contribute in some degree to an appreciation of liberty and good government. In the materials selected for study we can recognize the influences of our national life and indeed the broader influence of the eighteenth century in which our national life began. Political and civil liberty was the ideal most prized, and history has meant chiefly political history. The other aspects of society which are now becoming increasingly important have as yet found little place in history and little independent recognition in our curriculum. The studies of political institutions and political history need supplementation from the other fields of society's activities if we are to give the prospective member of society an appreciation of the meaning of social life.

But no study of history or sociology as such would be the moral instruction which is desirable. No one, so far as we know, has attempted to organize for young people the material we have in mind. In fact, although some lines of social ethics were struck out by Plato and Aristotle, and some others by the philosophy of a century ago, still other lines are just being traced by modern investigation.

The central idea in such a study would be the mutual interdependence between society and its members. It would show how and in what degree we owe to society language, science, mastery over nature, art, even personality and self-consciousness itself, as well as the more commonly recognized organization of industry, and the institutions of social, political and family life. Conversely it would show the constant remaking of society for better or for worse by the men and women who compose its membership. Such a study would of course not of itself supply motives for good citizenship; and yet would not the claims of society acquire a certain dignity by the mere fact that these were adjudged to be worth considering? At present business is treated as a means of getting a livelihood. What indication is ever given to the child that it is part of the moral life and an opportunity of contributing to human welfare? It is doubtless true enough that telling children this will not necessarily make them so regard their vocation. But if society never so much as hints in its educational system at such a meaning it is not surprising if few come to such a conviction unaided. To inculcate honesty in business while business itself is considered solely or chiefly as a means for individual "success" is futile and hypocritical. It may give the sort of honesty an exploiter of the public would like to have from his clerks. It will not even suggest the quality which the public most needs today. In fact we might almost say that business, laws, and public opinion will look out for the familiar types of virtues which have been found necessary for maintaining the existing order. What we may set before us as a goal

in moral instruction is rather the suggestion of the higher level which morality needs to seek continually if it would keep up with the new dangers that advancing civilization constantly brings with it.

When society realizes more fully what its real educational possibilities and needs are, we believe it will demand that whether its boys and girls study Latin or geometry or physics is of less importance than whether they study the meaning of the social life into which they are to enter. When the demand is clearly made the subject matter will be organized.

Which of these two standpoints and methods is better? Evidently a good teacher could use either method with success. But on the whole the more objective standpoint of the method which begins from the side of society will, we believe, commend it as most satisfactory for the average teacher.

J. H. T.